

Feminism in Islam- Reflection of Justice and Equality

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Abstract— *The contemporary and post-modern periods have challenged the common belief that feminism originated in the West and that Islam and feminism are naturally at odds with each other. In fact, the Qur'an itself contains the fundamental principles that support gender equality. Within the framework of Islamic teachings, gender justice is rooted in the values of equality, mutual responsibility, and shared spiritual accountability. Muslim feminist scholars have consistently pointed out that Islamic feminism has been misunderstood, misrepresented, and even distorted in various ways. It is often wrongly labeled as being against religion or against family values, but this is usually a result of cultural practices rather than the actual teachings of Islam. My interest in this topic comes from a genuine desire to explore and understand how Islam perceives gender equality, especially in light of the evolving discussions and movements within modern feminist thought.*



Keywords— *Religion, Islamic feminism, gender justice, misrepresentation*

Introduction

Islamic feminism is a movement that works towards achieving gender equality while staying rooted in the Islamic tradition. This concept has gained a lot of attention and discussion over the years, especially since the term was first introduced in the 1990s. The idea of Islamic feminism became prominent in Iran, where scholars like Afsaneh Najmabadi and Ziba Mir Hosseini explored how some women and men began using the term to express their views. They wrote about this in the Tehran-based women's journal called Zanan (Badran, 2009). In her book "Feminism in Islam," Professor Margot Badran explains Islamic feminism as a form of feminist thought and action that is based on the Islamic framework. It draws its understanding and authority from the Qur'an, and it aims to secure rights and justice for both women and men, considering their complete existence and roles in life. Islamic Feminism is a movement and area of study that works towards achieving true gender equality, but it does so within the beliefs and teachings of Islam. According to Islam, men and women are equal in rights and dignity, but they are not the same in every way. They have different physical, biological, and mental characteristics. The religion emphasizes spiritual equality, meaning that both

genders have the same value before God, but it also recognizes that there are different duties and responsibilities assigned to men and women, especially within the family. These differences are not seen as unequal, but rather as complementary, helping to maintain a balanced and peaceful society. Women are often regarded as the ones who play a key role in raising children, caring for the family, and managing the home. However, this does not mean that men are not important in the upbringing of children, nor does it prevent women from working or taking part in activities outside the home. In fact, Islam has given women many rights long before other parts of the world, such as the right to own property, to receive education, to inherit, to have a say in marriage, and even to seek a divorce if needed.

Feminism In Islam: A Reflection Of Justice And Equality

When Islam was revealed in seventh-century Arabia, it introduced a powerful message that the value of a woman's life is just as important as that of a man's. This idea challenged the existing norms of the time and laid the groundwork for a more balanced understanding of gender roles. In Islam, the different responsibilities given to men and women are not based on a belief in male superiority or

female inferiority. Instead, these distinctions come from the natural differences in their bodies, their physical makeups, and how they develop. Islam teaches that both men and women have equal spiritual value and the same potential for knowledge and wisdom. However, because of the way their bodies are structured and the different ways their hormones work, men and women may naturally be suited for different kinds of tasks. This doesn't mean one gender is better than the other, it simply means that roles are assigned in a way that supports fairness, stability, and peace in society. Islam encourages people to respect these natural differences while still treating everyone with dignity and fairness. This approach shows that true justice isn't about making everything the same, but about creating a system where everyone can thrive according to their unique strengths and abilities. Ibn Rushd, who authored a book known as *The Distinguished Jurist's Primer*, made a clear statement that "women are equal to men in every way when it comes to their natural abilities." He believed that the restriction of women from participating in public life was not due to religious teachings, but rather because of long-standing traditions and societal customs. Another major thinker, Al-Ghazali, emphasized the importance of ethical behavior and spiritual growth. He argued that the true purpose of life is to live morally and righteously, and he believed that this moral development is accessible to both men and women alike. In more recent times, scholars such as Amina Wadud have carried forward these ideas. She has written that "the Qur'an does not establish a hierarchy between men and women; instead, it establishes a system where both are accountable to one another and have the capacity to act with moral integrity." This perspective views gender roles as equal and balanced, rather than one being superior to the other. It is grounded in principles of fairness and justice, not in dominance or control.

Historical Perspective: Women In Early Islam

This understanding becomes even more apparent when we look at historical examples that show how modesty, responsibility, and active involvement in public life have always gone hand in hand without causing any conflict. The concept of purdah, which is often misinterpreted as a form of restriction, has never limited the intellectual, economic, or social abilities of women within the Islamic tradition. If purdah were actually a barrier, it would be impossible to explain how Hazrat Khadija (RA) was able to successfully manage large commercial ventures, or how the deep and valuable knowledge passed down by Hazrat Aisha (RA) reached the Muslim world with such strength and credibility. Fatima Mernissi, a scholar says that during the time of the prophet, women were clerally involved in public life, which goes against the idea that they were kept

away from society (Mernissi, 1991). Women like Hazrat Fatima (RA), Hazrat Zainab bint Ali (RA), Rufaidah Al-Aslamiyyahâ who was the first female nurse in Islamâ and Nusaybah bint Kaâb (RA), who bravely defended the Prophet (SAW) during the Battle of Uhud, serve as clear examples of how modesty never stopped women from leading, learning, starting businesses, or playing active roles in society. Taken together, these stories show that the Islamic concept of modesty is not about limiting women but rather about protecting their dignity and enabling them to take on important, impactful roles in the community.

Scholars have repeatedly pointed out that this idea of fairness and equality is deeply part of Islam. Leila Ahmed says that when Islam first started, it showed that both men and women are equal in terms of morality (Women and Gender in Islam, 1992, p. 42). She says that fairness between genders was always important, not something that came later. Amina Wadud also agrees, saying that the Qur'an treats both men and women as equally responsible for doing the right things (Qur'an and Woman, 1999, p. 14). This shows that in Islam, equality is about moral and spiritual responsibility, not just being the same in every way. At the same time, Islamic ideas don't think being equal means being exactly the same. Instead, they believe in adl, which is about fairness and making sure everyone is treated with respect, even if people are different. Asma Barlas explains that the Qur'an doesn't give men more importance than women; it speaks of equality in a way that is about morals and spirituality (Believing Women in Islam, 2002, p. 18). This allows for different roles in society without treating anyone as less important.

Modern Views On Justice And Equality Within Islam

Modern studies are increasingly focusing on a more flexible and evolving way of understanding the messages from the Qur'an, especially when it comes to issues related to gender. Many inequalities are not from the Qur'an itself, but from how people have interpreted it over time. A recent study (Hardy, 2025) says that Islamic feminism is a movement that tries to understand the true meaning of the Qur'an, not the ways that people have twisted it to support unfairness. They say that being unfair to women isn't something the Qur'an commands, but something that happened through certain traditional ways of reading it. Fidhayanti et al. (2024) also say that Islamic feminists now try to see the Qur'an in a new way that considers the real context of the time. This helps to show that justice is the main value in Islam. In the end, how Islam treats men and women isn't about making one better than the other or making them all the same. It's about a fair system that allows for differences but still gives everyone respect and dignity. By accepting both shared human qualities and

natural differences, Islam helps people grow in their own ways while keeping each other's worth in mind. In this way, fairness in Islam isn't about hiding differences, but about making sure those differences don't lead to unfair treatment or unfairness.

Today's thinkers, like Amina Wadud and Asma Barlas, suggest that the core Islamic values of *adl*, which means justice, and *ihsan*, which refers to compassionate fairness, naturally support the idea of equality. However, these principles have often been understood through the lens of traditional patriarchal norms in the past. These scholars encourage a fresh look at religious texts by clearly separating the original intentions of God from the cultural and social practices that influenced the development of classical Islamic legal traditions. In this updated perspective, justice is seen not just as treating everyone the same in a formal sense, but as a moral obligation to treat people with dignity, respect their independence, and ensure mutual respect between men and women. Equality, in this light, means fair treatment based on moral responsibility rather than identical roles, which allows for differences while opposing any form of hierarchy or discrimination. This approach positions Islamic feminism as a movement that is deeply rooted in religious faith, aiming to rediscover the Qur'an's original values of justice and to connect them with today's standards of human rights, all while staying true to the spiritual essence of Islam.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, when we look closely at the idea of Islamic femininity and examine it through the lens of justice and equality, we discover a deep and ever-developing moral vision that is rooted in Islamic teachings. The Qur'an places a strong emphasis on *adl*,

or justice, *ihsan*, which means compassion, and the inherent dignity of every human being. These values form a moral foundation in which both men and women are seen as equal in their spiritual nature and in the responsibility they bear towards morality. However, the gap between these lofty ideals and how they are actually practiced in society has mostly come from traditional views that are influenced by patriarchal attitudes and cultural norms, rather than from the messages that God has given us. In recent times, scholars like Amina Wadud and Asma Barlas have taken on the important task of re-evaluating how these teachings have been understood and applied. They have stressed the need to clearly separate the core spiritual truths from the legal rules that have been shaped by specific historical and cultural contexts. Their research shows that justice in Islam isn't something that is fixed and unchanging; instead, it needs to be regularly

reviewed and adapted as society evolves and new challenges arise. Today's conversations about equality in Islam highlight that it doesn't

mean everyone has to have the same roles, but rather that everyone should have fair treatment, respect, and the chance to succeed based on their abilities. This means that Islamic femininity is not a passive or static concept, but something that is active and powerful. It encourages women to take part in learning, to have a say in matters that affect them, to interpret religious texts, and to take on leadership roles within the boundaries of their faith. In this way, Islamic feminism is not something that is being forced from outside; it is an internal movement that seeks to rediscover and reconnect with the original spirit of justice and balance that the Qur'an was meant to convey. At the end of the day, the way justice and equality are reflected in Islamic femininity presents a strong combination of faith and progress. This approach doesn't reject tradition, but instead helps to reinterpret it in a way that makes it relevant for today's world. It invites a more inclusive and kind understanding of Islam, one that is based on compassion, mutual respect, and a shared sense of responsibility for creating a fair and just society. Therefore, Islamic femininity serves as a powerful example of how Islamic principles can continue to guide and influence our lives in dealing with modern issues, reminding us that true justice lies in recognizing and treating all people with the same value and dignity.

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